

# Merry Christmas!

*Special thanks to those who helped decorate the sanctuary for this important day. You brightened many lives with your thoughtful kindness.*

## Christmas Poinsettias

**Betsy Mollway**

**Paul Mollway**

**Gary & Barb Reding**

**Angie & Greg Umhoefer**

**Pastor Muriel**

**In Honor of Betsy's Children, Suzi & Justin**

**In Memory of Mollway family**

**In Memory of Jennifer Bader,**

**Dean & Phyllis Reding,**

**Jim & Pauline Zap**

**For the Lonely & Missing**

**Special thanks to soloists Jeanne Anderson and Ben Stucky, instrumentalist Karsin Bader and to our wonderful Choir for sharing their gift of music throughout the Christmas season!**

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## Announcements

† **Chair and Mat Yoga** with Katherine Ray is going weekly! Chair yoga at 10 AM and mat yoga at 11:30 AM. No RSVP required and classes are \$5.

† **Sunday School for Adults and Kids** is on break until Sunday, January 11th, 2026.

† **Christmas Eve Service** begins at 4 pm and is candlelight.



**Welcome** Donations can be made at [stjohns401.org](http://stjohns401.org), use the QR code, placed in the donation box at the parking lot entrance or mail to St. John's UCC, P.O. Box 798, Belvidere, IL 61008



General Giving

**Prelude** **"Jesus is Born Today"**

Jeanne Anderson and Ben Stucky, soloists

**Words of Celebration**

(Leader speaks *italics*, all speak **bold**)

*The Season of Christmas is upon us.*

**The people have walked in the shadows. The light now shines.**

*Hope seeps through,*

*Peace settles in,*

*Joy burst forth*

*and Love shines around us.*

*Christ is Come!*

**We are here to receive him!**

**"O Come All Ye Faithful"**

Processional Hymn

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,

Jesus, to thee be all glory given;

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

## "SILENT NIGHT"

**Silent night, holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright**

**Round yon virgin mother and child  
Holy Infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds quake at the sight  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia;  
Christ, the Savior, is born!  
Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

## **Benediction**

us to bring our inner children before God.

**These children within might be damaged, lonely, unsafe.**

They might be hungry and crying, bewildered and afraid.

**None of us arrives tonight unscathed.**

*We are all touched by the hardships of the world, which is why this moment is so sacred.*

**Just as Jesus comes to us in the manger, we stand here together, rapt with the miracle of this season.**

*God sent to us a son, a human being born of a vulnerable young woman with no rights, no healthcare – not even a woman by her side as she gave birth to the Christ child.*

**Yet she survived.**

Mary did what so many of us cannot – she allowed her faith to become everything when she was afraid.

*She conceived her child, confessed to her husband that the child she carried was not his, then gave birth to a son, who two millennia later, is still changing our lives.*

As we light our Christ candle tonight and spread the flame to each person here, let us hold the courage of Mary in our hearts.

**Now, and throughout this year, let her mother us all and renew our faith in Christ.**

Holy Communion

**Words of Institution**

**Consecration of Elements**

*Hold your communion elements up for blessing. Eat as a sign of your personal faith. Drink with Pastor Muriel and the rest of our online community as a sign of our communal faith.*

**"Jesus, Jesus, Rest your Head"** (Choir)

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Passing the Candlelight**

*Please, tip your unlit candle towards the flame so the lit candles can be held upright.*

**Children's Time**

**Sermon**     **"How do We tell The Story"**

**Sharing the Christmas Story**

**Luke 1:26-38**

**"HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"**     **Verses 1 & 3**

Hark the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King;  
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of righteousness,  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

**Lighting the Candle of Hope**

**Luke 2:1-7**

**"O Little Town of Bethlehem"**     **Verse 1**

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light;  
The hope and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

**Lighting the Candle of Love**

Luke 2:8-12

"AWAY IN A MANGER"

The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love you Lord Jesus; Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
And take us to heaven to live with thee there.

Lighting the Candle of Joy

Luke 2:13-15

"ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH"

Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply, Echo back their joyous strains.

Glo-----ria in excelsis Deo,  
Glo-----ria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be, Which inspire your heavenly song.

Glo-----ria in excelsis Deo,  
Glo-----ria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the new-born King.

Glo-----ria in excelsis Deo,  
Glo-----ria in excelsis Deo.

Lighting the Candle of Peace

Luke 2:16-20

"JOY TO THE WORLD"

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns;  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders of his love,  
wonders, and wonders of his love.

Lighting the Christ Candle

Tonight, we light the Christ candle.

**Many of us consider this to be the most holy moment of the season. As we watch the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love be lit, a familiar wonder fills our hearts.**  
*There is a lifting tonight, a gentleness of spirit making space for each of*